

How is Christianity Observed?

There are three main branches of Christianity. There are Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant. The Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic branches are the oldest Christian religions. They began shortly after the death of Christ. The Protestant religion was not born until the sixteenth century. Early Protestants protested against some of the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. They formed new Christian religions. Today there are more than 250 Protestant religions. Three of the largest Protestant groups in America are the Baptists, Methodists, and Lutherans.

Most Christian churches accept on or more traditional practices called *sacraments*. Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches stress some sacraments more than Protestant churches do. One of the most important sacraments is baptism. Baptism usually takes place soon after birth, but adults can be baptized, too. Baptism represents a person's entry into Christianity. Once a person is baptized, he or she is a follower of Christ. The baptism ceremony is performed with water. Usually a priest or minister sprinkles a few drops on a person's head. In some religions a person is immersed in the water.

Another sacrament that most Christians accept is called *communion*. Some churches observe communion every day; others observe it less often. Communion is a service that reminds Christians of Christ's death and all he did for humanity. During communion, Christians eat a piece of bread or a wafer. Many Christians also drink a little wine or grape juice. The bread stands for the body of Christ, and the wine stands for the blood of Christ. For many Christians, communion is a way of showing their faith in God.

Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches have spiritual leaders called *priests*. Priests explain the Bible and tell church members how to follow Christ's teachings. Protestant leaders are usually called *ministers*, *reverends*, or *pastors*. Ministers help church members study the Bible. In general, ministers encourage people to make their own decisions about how to follow Christ. Almost all priests and ministers deliver short speeches called *sermons*. Sermons often tell church members how to apply Christian principles to everyday life.

The two most important Christian holidays are *Christmas* and *Easter*. Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus. Most Christians observe Christmas on December 25th. Christmas is known as the season of "peace on Earth and good will toward men." Easter celebrates Christ's disappearances from his tomb and his rise into heaven. Easter takes place on a Sunday in early spring. Easter is a joyous holiday that Christians celebrate both in their homes and their churches.

Name _____

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The words on the left can be found in the story. Draw a line from the words on the left to the words or phrases on the right that have the same meaning. The first one is done for you.

main	complained
usually	most important
follower	daily
deliver	occasionally
sometimes	assist
every day	believer
help	give or send
protested	almost every time

Find the word(s) in the story to fill in the blanks.

1. The Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic religions began shortly after the _____ of Christ.
2. Early Protestants protested against some of the teachings of the Roman Catholic _____.
3. Baptism represents a person's _____ into Christianity.
4. Christians drink _____ or _____ during communion.
5. Religious leaders tell people how to _____ Christ's teachings.
6. Most Christians observe Christmas on _____ 25th.
7. Christmas is known as the season of "_____ and good will toward men."
8. Easter celebrates Christ's rise into _____.
9. Easter takes place on a _____ in early spring.
10. There are more than 250 different _____ religions.

The words in the list below can be found in the puzzle on the right. The words are written in any direction. Find and circle each word.

MINISTER	CEREMONY
JUICE	MAIN
COMMUNION	CHURCH
TOMB	DEATH
CHRIST	BIRTH

